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## **The Newest Global Epidemic: Understanding the Zika Virus**

Over the course of the past two years, a new epidemic has begun to swarm the nations of the world and leave long lasting effects on the globe. The Zika virus, known for its correlation with mosquitos, has ravaged the nations of South America, Central America, and the Caribbean, and has led up to up to four hundred thousand people contracting the disease. Although the virus can affect anyone, it causes substantial issues for pregnant women and newborn babies, who can experience severe birth defects, the most common one being microcephaly. Since this disease hasn't spread significantly in Western countries, underdeveloped countries are being slaughtered with the aftershocks of Zika. Most of the time when epidemics hit third world countries, they don't have the necessary equipment to combat and treat the disease. The countries in the South America area, and island regions are struggling from the lack of resources to cope with the defects and problems Zika causes. In these places, there are no built in programs and money to help withhold the issue at hand. Globally, many Western countries are beginning to chip in the process of stopping Zika, but until their is a set up infrastructure in place which contains programs and international funding, Zika will continue to blow through and destroy these countries. Estimated statistics are showing that Zika will grow up to ten percent in the next year, and may play a more substantial role in children's health and life. Without a direct plan of action, Zika will quickly become a key factor in the decaying health of young kids around the world.

A global initiative has begun in order to try and minimize the casualties of Zika. UNICEF, a member of the United Nations Development Group, have begun deliberating on the most efficient ways to combat the disease. Since UNICEF largely focuses on the humanitarian and developmental assistance to children and mothers in developing countries, the task they are trying to address is how to effectively educate, but also how to catch and treat Zika in third world countries. Many delegates in the committee have come together and agreed that education is one of the most important tools they can use. The delegates from Malaysia, Ukraine, and South Korea proposed a plan of action having education at the center. The plan proposed that in underdeveloped countries, the government issues pamphlets, billboards, newspaper articles, missionaries, and magazine articles, stressing the signs of Zika and the steps the individual should take if they believe themselves or a family member might have caught the disease. Also, another core principle was the use of maps to accurately draw out areas where there are cautionary Zika warnings, and then where there are Zika breakouts. Distinguished by the colors yellow and red, the use of action would be different in both. In red zones, areas of Zika breakouts, would contain mandatory clinic visits, hospitals administered by UN approved healthcare officials, and extensive Zika information. On the other hand, in yellow zones, where there are only cautionary warnings, they would have free clinics that were offered to anyone who wanted to be screened, and Zika pamphlets provided to the population. This course also offered the use of social media to provide information on the virus in more developed Western countries.

Since the epidemic is developing rapidly, a conscious effort has to be made to try and end it, or at least reduce the rate of exposure. With attempts from UNICEF, and other programs around the world, the world can have a fighting chance in stopping the virus. Although change is beginning to take place, there is a long road ahead of us. Stopping Zika isn't going to happen overnight, it might not even happen in our lifetimes, but as a society, we have to come together and try to build a better world for the future and mankind.